

FULL COUNCIL 14 DECEMBER 2016

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**6. Questions from members of the public****1. Question from Mr John Knowles**

To Councillor Walsh, Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital

Were the Council aware at the time, that by purchasing the excellent established Community of properties in St. Michaels Gate, even at the asking price of circa £9 million, that they would have made a fantastic rental investment. Also that this fine Community could have been kept together, people could have kept their jobs children would have kept their school places and that families would have kept their homes?

Councillor Walsh responded:

Thank you Mr Knowles for your question. The answer to which is that it is not generally the Council's practice to buy occupied properties in order to become landlords. In fact, we are at the moment going through a process of divestiture in connection with community assets.

However, due to our growing concern about homelessness, when we became aware that St Michael's Gate was for sale on the open market we did make general enquiries to the agent and a number of officers visited the location. Before we had any time to give formal consideration to the idea of buying the properties, the offer made by who we now know to be Paul Simon Magic Investments Ltd was accepted.

We didn't arrange for our own independent evaluation of St Michael's Gate. However, our property experts felt, that the properties should have been valued at around £7m, far below the owner's asking price and far below the price we understand the properties finally sold for.

So in conclusion Mr Mayor, this Council or any other Council for that matter would not be in a position ever to compete with Stef & Philips or Paul Simon Magic in the way suggested by Mr Knowles. The business model operated by them is predicated on the high financial receipts that can be obtained through occupation of properties by homeless households. Unless there is a change in the law and/or some mechanism found to preclude such business models operating they would always be in a position to outbid others and if necessary pay over the odds. Thank you.

Mr Knowles asked a supplementary question:

Did any communications take place between council officers in Peterborough, Luton or the London councils such as Newham where I believe Stef and Philips did a similar deal? If they did why did not officers warn the council of the dangers of not buying these properties? The fact is that we all know that there is great communication particularly between Peterborough and Newham and there's great communication between this Council and other councils I know that as an ex Councillor. Thank you.

	<p>Councillor Walsh responded:</p> <p>The answer to the question is no we were not aware at that time. Thank you.</p>
2.	<p>Question from Mr Jonathan Wilde</p> <p>To Councillor Seaton, Cabinet Member for Resources</p> <p>Given the unpalatable position the Peterborough City Council now finds itself in; having committed itself to a course of action that was not initially transparent - Cllr Johnson not having been notified of this issue of considerable value and social impact which was to be applied in the ward she represents - what measures or guarantees have been put in place to ensure that such transactions are fully scrutinised for impact assessment on tax paying residents, school and nursery attendance, employment and social services prior to entering into such a contract, and will the Leader give his assurance that the operational backgrounds of companies transacted with are not limited to financial checks and returns to Companies House, but that the business models are also ethically sound and socially responsible?</p> <p>Councillor Seaton responded:</p> <p>Thank you Mr Wilde for your question. I recall your attendance at the Call In on the St Michael's Gate issue as a representative of the Labour Party and I do appreciate your continued interest in this issue.</p> <p>With regard to your question your point about Councillor Johnson I think I should note that I appreciate Cllr Johnson's input on this issue. I know that she has met with officers, we have exchanged emails and she has attended public meetings. However just to respond to your suggestion she was not notified, I would advise you that contact was made with all ward Councillors prior to this proposal being made public. Councillor Johnson was not available on the telephone so a voicemail message was left. Councillor Johnson then made contact after listening to her voicemail and met with Adrian Chapman and Sean Evans our housing manager to discuss the proposal. Councillor Johnson advised she was aware of the proposal prior to it being made public as it was discussed at a previous cross party budget working group.</p> <p>With regards to the scrutiny of business models, and the impact of the actions of this Council, on such transactions, we do, of course, already consider this. Indeed the cross party member officer working group looked at the issue of ethical behaviour across a range of Council activity and ultimately did not recommend any changes. However such an approach is ultimately highly subjective with St Michael's Gate being an example of this.</p> <p>You will be aware from the Call In that this Council had to make a very difficult decision. We knew that the residents would be given notice, whatever we did, and we had to consider the impact on this City of a constant stream of homeless people being moved to this area by another Council. Now to anyone who suggests that would not happen, please search on-line – it's not only London Boroughs but also, for example, the Labour-led Milton Keynes, who are moving 110 families to Luton.</p> <p>You quite rightly highlight the added pressure this would have placed on schools and nurseries, employment and social services, but also GP surgeries, the NHS and, after six months the people moving here would be eligible to apply for social housing.</p> <p>I fully acknowledge that to enter into this agreement was distasteful. I've said that today on the Paul Stainton show, I've said it to BBC television, I've said it to ITV.</p>

However, as you say, an impact assessment must be made, and our view was that the impact would have been far greater on a much larger number of residents had we not signed a contract, than if we did. Thank you Mr Wilde.

Mr Wilde asked a supplementary question:

Thank you Councillor for your considered response. Very briefly are you able to provide the Council here with an assurance that St Michael's Gate is the only example of this particular contract that has been entered into or are there other developments under consideration perhaps with Stef & Philips or others?

Councillor Seaton responded:

Thank you Mr Wilde. It is certainly the only contract of this type that Peterborough City Council has entered in to. I'm sure if you're asking, you weren't specific to Peterborough, there are a very large number across London boroughs across the country and indeed if you hang around I will give you some details of that later on. Thank you.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

8. Questions on notice to:

- i) The Mayor
- ii) To the Leader or Member of the Cabinet
- iii) To the Chair of any Committee or Sub-committee

1.

Question from Councillor Sandford

To Councillor Seaton, Cabinet Member for Resources

In 2009 (ie over seven years ago) Full Council passed a motion calling for investigation of the possibility of internet broadcasting (live or recorded) of Council meetings.

Could the relevant Cabinet Member tell me what is happening with this, as numerous other councils (including Cambridgeshire County Council) have introduced such a facility.

Given that our chief executive now heads up both Cambs County and PCC, could she be asked to get relevant officers together as soon as possible to share relevant knowledge, so that people in Peterborough can have an easy way of viewing and listening to PCC debates and decisions.

Councillor Seaton responded:

The webcasting project was initially considered in 2012, and detailed research was undertaken, but this was subsequently halted due to financial implications and additional resources that were required.

During 2014 members requested that this project be looked at again and taken to the Joint Member Officer and Constitutional Working Group.

This project was discussed in detail, which included cost implications which were considered to be substantial by the Working Group. The costs were in the region of £15,000.00 for the first year and around £10,000.00 per annum as ongoing costs, these costings did not include additional officer time required to support this. The initial review of the meeting rooms and associated works that would be required, to support the initial review of the meeting rooms, and associated works that would be required prior to implementation of any equipment.

The working group therefore recommended that no further progress to be taken on this project at that time, the rationale being the Council's current financial position and the ongoing position likely to be faced going forward.

The Member Officer Working Group will be meeting in February 2017, and this will be added to the agenda for discussion at that meeting. I will ask that details from the county are shared then and I believe Councillor Sandford you will sit on that group. Thank you Mr Mayor.

Councillor Sandford asked a supplementary question:

I am grateful to Councillor Seaton for that answer but I'd like to ask him what

	<p>cost £15,000.00? The costs of video technology is dropping all the time. You can go to Argos and buy a camera for £20.00-£25.00 that sort of thing. We already have a council PR officer who sits in the meeting. Could they not hold the camera or have a camera next to them. How is it we have councils up and down the country including Cambridgeshire County Council that have been doing this for an awful long time, why is it we can't move into the 21st century and enable the people of Peterborough to see what's going on in this council chamber?</p> <p>Councillor Seaton responded:</p> <p>I actually said those were the costings from 2014. It's interesting. I'm sure we can bring it in at a cheaper rate but you have to take into account that the county council probably get about 100 people viewing their meetings perhaps more than the 5 or 6 hardy stalwarts including myself who watch the local Lib Dem videos on YouTube. When I was looking at the local Lib Dem videos on YouTube I did notice one that had substantially more views and it was one by Russell Brand. It's a video if you want to look at it, it has 24,000 views, are the Liberal democrats the most pointless party? Thank you Mr Mayor.</p>
2.	<p>Question from Councillor Ferris</p> <p>To Councillor Holdich, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Skills, University, and Communications</p> <p>Acknowledging the health benefits of walking and cycling to school, and noting the growing road safety problems encountered outside Park Ward's schools (Kings, TDA, Queens Drive and All Saints) and most other schools in the city, what steps does the Cabinet Member responsible think can be taken to encourage the adoption of sustainable school transport plans?</p> <p>Councillor Holdich responded:</p> <p>The safety of children and young people on their school journey or at any other time is a key priority for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's Road Safety Partnership. During 2015, 90 young people (aged 0 - 15 years) were injured on Peterborough's Roads.</p> <p>As schools expand to meet increasing demand congestion outside is increased as you have seen in Park Ward. The Prevention and Enforcement Service works closely with schools to deliver various road safety activities ranging from parking enforcement to delivery of practical training which aims to give children the skills they need to keep them safe on the road.</p> <p>The health benefits of walking to school are well publicised. The Travel Choice and Road Safety teams work closely together to promote safe and sustainable travel to school. Various programmes are available to schools including pedestrian training, scooter training and Bikeability training.</p> <p>Although School Travel Plans are not compulsory unless part of a Planning Application, then the Travel Choice Team has developed a School Travel Plan toolkit which has been distributed and promoted to all schools outlining the benefits of such a plan. The team as well as the Road Safety service are also on hand to offer advice to schools to develop their own individual travel plans if required.</p> <p>Councillor Ferris asked a supplementary question:</p>

	<p>May I suggest that school travel plans and enforcement are merely sticking plasters and so my question is what plans are there to design and fit retrofit engineered solutions which discourage car use and encourage responsible driving, ease congestions and improve air quality around all our city's schools as is being done elsewhere?</p> <p>Councillor Holdich responded:</p> <p>Perhaps if that question is recorded I will get a written answer. It's rather a long concluded question which I don't have the answer to in detail so.</p>
3.	<p>Question from Councillor Sylvester</p> <p>To Councillor Goodwin, Cabinet Member for City Centre Management, Culture and Tourism</p> <p>In view of the likely loss of the Broadway Theatre as a performance venue will the Cabinet Member responsible give an undertaking to include a concert hall/arts venue in any plans for development on the North Westgate site?</p> <p>Councillor Goodwin responded:</p> <p>I know this is a very important issue to a number of people around the city. We are at the very early stages of considering what the future mix of land use in the North Westgate regeneration area could be. We will be working with key landowners as well as potentially using our compulsory purchase powers to assemble the land to bring forward this development. It will be important to ensure that any scheme is financially viable, and that investment in the site achieves a financial return for the Council rather than of course resulting in any further revenue pressures. However I can confirm that we will review with partners whether a concert hall and/or an arts venue would be financially viable.</p> <p>Councillor Sylvester asked a supplementary question:</p> <p>That was the sort of answer I was expecting. It is a far cry from the feedback in the budget conversation survey which said the plans to invest in North Westgate would unblock the regeneration of this area, providing a new gateway to the city, making Peterborough a more attractive place to live and work in and what we have just been told.</p> <p>My question is where was your vision?</p> <p>Councillor Goodwin responded:</p> <p>As I've just said we really are in the very early stages of this development and I'll certainly keep Councillor Sylvester informed of anything of what's going on in Peterborough. I'll keep you informed.</p>
4.	<p>Question from Councillor Saltmarsh</p> <p>To Councillor Sam Smith, Cabinet Member for Children's Services</p> <p>Noting that out of 48,400 children in our unitary authority area 12,000 are still living in poverty will you please advise members if the Child Poverty Strategy and the Neglect Strategy are proving effective in combating this problem</p>

particularly in the city's most deprived areas?

Councillor Smith responded:

Both these are both important issues that are of concern to me and both strategies are newly adopted and I will take two parts as I wouldn't want people to think that living in poverty means that you neglect your children.

Neglect is largely about parenting and tackling neglect is therefore about making sure that parents receive the support around parenting in factors such as post-natal depression, which left untreated, can be associated with neglect.

The Safeguarding Children Board Neglect strategy was launched in September of this year and is focused on helping those who work with children and their families to recognise the early signs of neglect, and to give them the tools to help families address these issues.

Since the launch of the strategy, the Safeguarding Board has organised a large number of training courses to support practitioners at all levels who work in areas with children.

Ultimately, we should be able to measure the impact of the neglect strategy through things like the number of children being referred to children's social care because of neglect, but with the strategy having just been launched in September it is a little bit too early to report on that yet.

Tackling child poverty is a long-term goal, and the strategy is one that has been developed this year and runs through to 2020.

Senior officers have been allocated to each of the strategic areas and there are eight within that strategy, and they are currently working through a range of performance measures to help us progress that strategy through and I will personally be working with Cabinet Members to make sure that strategy is championed.

Tackling child poverty is an issue that we need to make a concerted effort to break the cycle between generations. And that's why it's a long term strategy. We also need to raise aspirations and that's why the longer term, council priorities such as getting University, attracting high levelled skilled and highly paid employment to the City is an important one. There are other examples of how we are currently tackling poverty in the city. For example I know the resources team are working with families on fuel poverty, the housing team are working with landlords to improve the standards of private rented housing so hopefully families can spend less on their fuel bills and have more money for other child related things.

We also have a Connecting Families programme which is working very closely with a number of families and we're working with 1,200 currently and we are getting success in those areas.

Councillor Saltmarsh asked a supplementary question:

I would just like to ask if Ward Councillors for the more deprived areas are kept informed of developments and any specific actions which are happening in their wards.

Councillor Smith responded:

	<p>Yes, absolutely. I know there are at least four areas of the city that are highly deprived. We have a number of children living in poverty and one of those wards is my own and yes I would absolutely feedback to Members and to the Scrutiny panel on how we are performing on that.</p>
5.	<p>Question from Councillor Ali</p> <p>To Councillor Walsh, Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital</p> <p>Will the Cabinet Member responsible outline what efforts are being made to regenerate Millfield and the Lincoln Road corridor, and when can local people expect to see some genuine improvements to the local environment?</p> <p>Councillor Walsh responded:</p> <p>I am pleased to report that the long term commitment from this Council to leading the improvement of the Millfield and New England area is set to continue, although there is clearly much more to be done.</p> <p>Our current focus is on tackling the issues associated with the streetscene - litter, graffiti and fly tipping in particular that is blighting the lives of the residents and businesses in the area. We have already put in place a dedicated Prevention and Enforcement Service Team. Our community development programme, now delivered by City College Peterborough, is focussing on this area of Peterborough and will be supporting local people to improve their skills, take up volunteering opportunities and start new businesses. We are also working closely with the business owners along Lincoln Road supporting them to come together to identify opportunities to attract new investment and to increase their footfall.</p> <p>Alongside this activity we want to turn our attention to the physical improvements needed in the area. Although there is no existing budget to improve this public realm, this will be considered alongside other capital bids as part of the phase 2 budget proposals. Meanwhile the area is included in the first phase of the LED street light replacement programme and as of November the LED lighting team has replaced 201 lanterns in North Ward, 158 in Park Ward, and is due to start work in Central Ward in December.</p> <p>Finally, as part of discussions linked to Devolution 2, we are assembling a package of proposals that will, if approved, see devolved powers and funding coming from Central Government targeted specifically on the Millfield and New England areas. We expect to be able to report more on this in January.</p> <p>All of this will help us achieve our ambition of seeing Lincoln Road become a destination similar to many previously challenged streets around the country that now have a regional or national reputation for food, social interaction and celebration. And Councillor Ali may recall a meeting of cando, the last one, I did say it has always been my dream to see that area become the golden mile.</p> <p>Councillor Ali asked a supplementary question:</p> <p>I know that we have been talking about this area quite considerably and quite a lot of initiatives have been started but my issue is we have not seen any sustained improvement that the community can feel and that business owners can feel. Only last week you weren't present but the Deputy Mayor was, we</p>

	<p>actually had a look at Christmas decorations that were put up by the business owners and I had another opportunity to talk to the people and again it's a consistent question, the area doesn't look welcoming enough. All I'm asking this Council and Councillor Walsh some firm commitment that we will see some genuine sustained improvement in the area. We keep talking about the great diversity that we have in this city but we have yet to see some real action. When can we see some real improvements? Thank you.</p> <p>Councillor Walsh responded:</p> <p>Obviously this cannot be done overnight but I do share your commitment and I do understand your frustration you feel based on what has happened in the past. We mean to change that. Thank you.</p>
6.	<p>Question from Councillor Shearman</p> <p>To Councillor Eley, Cabinet Member for Waste and Street Scene</p> <p>I have received complaints from residents living in Newark Avenue about the regular bonfires being lit on the allotment site behind their homes. Their concerns were brought to a head with the lighting of a huge bonfire on Firework night. This happened despite the allotment holders being told by the council's PCC/Amey liaison officer that such a bonfire was contrary to the rules for allotment holders.</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member explain what action the Council/Amey intends to take in order to bring to an end the thoughtless behaviour of a number of allotment holders on this site.</p> <p>Councillor Eley may respond:</p> <p>I have to say I'm struggling to find an awful lot of sympathy for somebody whose complaining about bonfire being lit on a night which for 100s of years across the country has been known by millions of people as 'Bonfire Night' it is part of our culture. Having said that with regards to what has been happening on this site I am aware that we have only received a complaint from one resident in Newark Avenue and that both Pollution Control and other officers have been in contact. To enable us to take any enforcement action we need to be able to prove a statutory nuisance. As such Pollution Control have asked the resident to fill in a log sheet with dates and times of incidents to which he is unhappy and to this date he has not done it.</p> <p>Due to the very nature of allotment gardening not all by-products can be composted and items might need to be burned, we agreed following a request, several requests from both Councillor Fox and Councillor Murphy to look at a policy of reinstating bonfires for allotments which we have done with strict guidelines which means bonfires can only be lit between October and March, which rules out any bonfires being lit on allotments in the summer months when most of our city residents will be enjoying their gardens and hanging out their washing.</p> <p>Finally I would like to inform Councillor Shearman that since the bonfire night bonfire, the secretary of the Rowan Avenue Allotment Association who arranged the community event has since resigned.</p> <p>Councillor Shearman asked a supplementary question:</p>

	<p>The main thrust of my question was that James Collingridge ordered that organisation not to have a bonfire on firework night. One it was something like 15 foot tall, and secondly that regulations do state that fires have to be lit in an allocated area. I'm going to ask you a question that's not meant to be critical of you, are you saying that you don't support the views of our Amey/PCC Liaison Officer who instructed these people to have no bonfire and it may be the answer to my question is the result of some intervention from James has been the resignation of this particular person you are talking about. Thank you very much.</p> <p>Councillor Elsey responded:</p> <p>The short answer is of course I support the officers and I've spoken at length with James about this and at no point has he told me that he instructed them not to do so. I will take it up with him and I will report back to Councillor Shearman.</p>
7.	<p>Question from Councillor Davidson</p> <p>To Councillor Walsh, Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital</p> <p>Could the relevant Cabinet Member confirm if all avenues were explored in relation to vacant buildings and properties, which were sat empty! Why was the iconic building in Laxton Square not considered for providing temporary accommodation for the homeless?</p> <p>Councillor Walsh may respond:</p> <p>The Council has worked with its partner NPS to identify a suitable empty property which could be used for accommodation purposes.</p> <p>The Council is in discussion with Cross Keys Homes regarding the use of the empty property at Elizabeth Court, which is already constructed as housing and therefore needs limited renovation for occupation.</p> <p>Officers continue to work with owners of empty properties across the city to enable or encourage them to bring them back into use. To further support this, and to provide additional opportunities for using empty properties to house people in housing need, a new Empty Homes Strategy will be presented to Scrutiny Committee in January - this includes more incentives for owners to work with the council.</p> <p>In relation to Laxton House, this property was leased from Jellings Properties Ltd for a term of 25 years expiring on 17th July 2013. The property was returned to the Landlord on 18th October 2013, and is therefore in private ownership and not at the disposal of the Council.</p>
8.	<p>Question from Councillor Ferris</p> <p>To Councillor Hiller, Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning, Housing and Economic Development</p> <p>Recognising the increasing frequency with which routes in and out of the city are experiencing gridlock, does the Cabinet Member responsible agree that the city's transport plan needs to be revisited, to set out costed, deliverable plans to encourage the use of public transport, cycling and walking in order to show</p>

genuine commitment to sustainability and our claim to be the UK's Environment Capital?

Councillor Hiller may respond:

I know through conversations I have had with him (Councillor Ferris) that he is a firm advocate of growth and economic success over recent years and by the nature of his question he appears to appreciate it certainly brings challenges. Telling a commuter in a traffic jam that we have one of the best road networks in the country with one of the fastest commuting times isn't always helpful Mr Mayor in assuaging their frustration. That said I would direct anyone to nearby cities during their rush hour to see what gridlock really looks like. On Thursday last week I walked from Cambridge station to the Council HQ and arrived sooner than one of my colleagues who took a taxi. That's gridlock Mr Mayor. And we have to make sure that does not happen in our city of Peterborough. The main challenge we face and that any would have to face is that our much envied parkway system was designed to manage a traffic volume probably a tenth of what it is today. We recognised that and years ago planned an upgrade of improvements and capacity increases with the challenges we face today and for our planned future growth. It is inevitable that motorists will experience some delays whilst the programme for capacity improvements is implemented. In my time as the Cabinet Member responsible I have been lucky enough to have worked through some of the largest network infrastructure programmes ever to happen within Peterborough. The multi-faceted Van Hague roundabout scheme, the Boongate slip road capacity expansion, the parkway flyover bridges upgrades, the massive Fletton Parkway scheme to facilitate our planned growth near the A1 and the current A47/A15 junction works. These are essential works Mr Mayor, essential to keep our city moving and a committed investment in an asset which directly supports both the local economy and also helps attract inward investment. I don't actually agree our plan needs revisiting Mr Mayor.

Our fourth Local Transport Plan was adopted after extensive consultation in April this year. Publicly through Scrutiny in this chamber and it clearly sets out the sustainable modes of transport cited and additionally how transport improvements will support the planned growth in housing and employment.

We also recognise in that plan that sustainable transport has a key role to play in Peterborough. Through our Travelchoice project, we have been successful in securing large amounts of Government funding to promote walking, cycling, public transport, car sharing and ultra-low emission vehicles.

Councillor Ferris asked a supplementary question:

We heard a huge amount there, a list of road asset improvements. I think that highlights one of my concerns actually. My supplementary question is other than the large number of rather cheap city centre car parks, and by that I mean cheap as in value for money or price, why does Peterborough differ from Bedford or Cambridge Chelmsford, Ipswich, Leicester, Milton Keynes, Norwich and Nottingham where park and ride schemes operate successfully reducing traffic flows in and out of the town and city centres and improve air quality.

Councillor Hiller responded:

To answer the question succinctly we have tried park and ride as you well know we have tried park and ride Councillor Ferris. People just don't use it. We tried it at Christmas time over many years, its popularity just declined so we

	decided not to do it I'm afraid.
9.	<p>Question from Councillor Ash</p> <p>To Councillor Hiller, Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning, Housing and Economic Development</p> <p>Does the Cabinet Member agree with me that road safety seems to be far from uppermost in people's minds when they're out and about? Be it pedestrian, driver, or cyclist there is a lack of thought shown to others.</p> <p>Does the Member also agree that particularly at this time of year visibility is essential and that good street lighting is an important part of road safety?</p> <p>Can the Member therefore give assurances that our roads, footpaths and cycle ways are well designed and properly lit so as to be safe for users.</p> <p>Can the Member also tell us what action, if any, is being taken to remind people that they should consider their own safety and the impact of their actions (or lack of action).</p> <p>Councillor Hiller responded:</p> <p>I have separated my response into four parts Mr Mayor but I'll try and be as quick as I can. You ask Councillor Ash whether I agree if road safety seems far from uppermost in people's minds when they out and about. I don't imagine anyone here tonight is qualified enough to determine peoples thoughts about their own safety or indeed their attitudes towards others in this regard. I think we would all agree that there appears to be on occasion a lack of thought in these areas. Councillor Ash will be aware of our Safer Peterborough Partnership is very active in the promotion of road safety issues and their road safety action plan contains key areas of work to reduce casualties by focusing on many areas including Winter driving, and cycling and I'm sure my colleague Councillor Walsh will provide Members with more details about this if they want to talk to her after the meeting. You go on to ask if I think good street lighting us important and again I think we would all agree that it is.</p> <p>Your question continues with a requested for me to assure you that our footpaths and cycle ways are well designed and properly lit ensuring the safety of all users. As this is my area of responsibility I guess I would have responded as a professional and highly regarded local authority we would want to ensure that that is the case and I've no reason to think otherwise. All new highway infrastructure in Peterborough is designed in accordance with relevant local and national standards including public lighting. Additionally Mr Mayor despite there actually being no statutory requirement on local authorities to provide public lighting Councillor Ash will be aware that the Conservative administration has embarked upon a massive infrastructure upgrade which is currently happening across our city, some 17,000 lights are being replaced with high output, super-efficient LED units over the next three years Mr Mayor.</p> <p>To conclude you asked me about any action being taken to remind folk that they should consider their own and others safety and I think Councillor Walsh will probably be more up to date in this regard but as a former Member I do know that Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Road Safety Partnership deliver various road safety campaigns throughout the year which are aimed at influencing the attitude and behaviour of road users. Thank you Mr Mayor.</p>

	<p>Councillor Ash asked a supplementary question:</p> <p>Could I just ask could we be assured that some of the LED lighting is powerful enough? I know in my Ward there are now some streets that are now very badly light and I do seek assurances that that's improved and I do think that perhaps we could use as other cities do, our street lights to have banners to remind people about road safety particularly along Bourges Boulevard. I do know that one section of Bourges Boulevard is now in total darkness and whether he agrees that's safe for a busy road particularly at this time of year.</p> <p>Councillor Hiller responded:</p> <p>This is a grey area and I know I speak for Councillor Walsh has introduced a very effective and new enforcement service which is delivering the annual Be Safe, Be Seen campaign which I think is probably close to Councillor Ash's heart. Various activities and I'm sure Councillor Walsh will correct me if I'm wrong, various activities taking place across the city in partnership with primary school, secondary schools and businesses and will continue the Winter months to remind all road users of this important message. With regard to your specific question points LED is actually a lot brighter and better than the existing old orange lights. If there are specific areas which he feels aren't properly light after they've been replaced then please let me know and I'll get our engineers to have a look at that. Decorating lampposts with signage you'll get as many people complain about that as think it's an advantage especially I have to say in the Leader's and my rural areas and Councillor Over's rural areas and street signage is, unless it's absolutely necessary is normally frowned upon. Thank you Mr Mayor.</p>
10.	<p>Question from Councillor Shearman</p> <p>To Councillor Elsey, Cabinet Member for Waste and Street Scene</p> <p>Following the great success of Community Skips, provided regularly by Labour Party members and councillors in Park, Dogsthorpe, North and Central Wards, will the Cabinet Member responsible for street scene give an undertaking to reintroduce free bulky waste collections, and draw up a plan for free community skips to be provided across the city, in order to address the fly tipping and littering problems that are now so common?</p> <p>Councillor Elsey may have responded:</p> <p>Thank you for your question, in short no, unfortunately I cannot give this undertaking however we are looking at a number of initiatives to mitigate against fly tipping which include community skips and bulky charges.</p> <p>We need to be mindful that community skips will not be the answer for all areas and as an example Bretton Parish Council are offering a free community freighter initiative and we have actually seen fly tipping on the increase.</p> <p>At this time we cannot indicate what initiatives will be put forwards but we will come back with proposals for phase 2 of the budget.</p>
11.	<p>Question from Councillor Davidson</p> <p>To Councillor Walsh, Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital</p>

	<p>Could the relevant Cabinet Member advise when Luton Borough Council confirmed that they were interested and in the frame to purchase the 74 dwellings at St Michael's Gate, Parnwell, Peterborough, and from which officer this confirmation was received.</p> <p>Councillor Walsh may have responded:</p> <p>First, let me be clear that Luton Borough Council have never approached us in relation to making use of the homes at St Michael's Gate. Luton Council is known to have many hundreds of families in temporary accommodation and was used as an example of one of many councils who may look to house their own homeless households in St Michael's Gate. Additionally, Luton happens to be one of the areas where Stef & Philips have purchased other properties, which were offered to Luton Council but then taken up by a London borough.</p> <p>As has been made clear in much of the recent publicity, a significant number of councils across the UK are facing unprecedented levels of pressure on temporary accommodation, many far in excess of Peterborough's current challenge. We have correspondence from Stef & Philips Ltd which makes it very clear that St Michael's Gate would be very attractive to other councils, including London boroughs, should we have decided not to make use of the properties.</p>
12.	<p>Question from Councillor Fower</p> <p>To Councillor Holdich, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Skills, University, and Communications</p> <p>Could the relevant Cabinet Member please tell me how much money we pay each year to Athene Communications, whether we have an actual contract with them and if we do what it is for, and how long it is for and how much have we paid them in total so far?</p> <p>Councillor Holdich may have responded:</p> <p>We, like every council in the country, use contractors when there is a need which cannot be met in house. This is usually for two reasons; when a level of expertise is needed which we do not have in house, or if there is a short term need for additional resource.</p> <p>In the past year a number of departments have required external support for communications and have used Athene Communications. These projects have included:</p> <p>Adults and Communities, selective licensing - included a large scale piece of work to inform landlords and tenants in the affected areas of the change to the law. Communicating the new scheme well has been crucial to its success.</p> <p>Governance, HR - change projects such as Going Google and the move towards agile working and Fletton Quays. It is crucial staff understand and embrace these new ways of working as this will save us money and allow us to provide more co-ordinated services for our residents - communications is key to this.</p> <p>Resources - support in the media team was required whilst a member of the team was on maternity leave. The decision was made to not appoint a 12 month replacement, but to use support from Athene on a 'when required' basis.</p>

	<p>Overall the council has reduced its budgeted spend on communications in the past few years and therefore there has been a need to use external companies when there are large scale pieces of work which cannot be handled in-house.</p> <p>In the current year to date we have spent £159,603 with Athene Communications. In the last financial year the spend was £187,727. We do not have one contract with Athene, individual departments use the company for individual projects as required.</p> <p>There is always likely to be a need to use external companies for communications projects which require significant support, however we are looking to reduce the spend in the new financial year.</p> <p>A new service manager for communications is now in post and she will be carrying out a restructure of the communications team to ensure there is sufficient resource to be able to meet the council's needs in house, therefore reducing the spend on external suppliers.</p>
13.	<p>Question from Councillor Fower</p> <p>To Councillor Hiller, Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning, Housing and Economic Development</p> <p>Could the relevant Cabinet Member, please inform me how much the wooden barrier located on the footpath at the Gunthorpe Road end of Elter Walk cost to install, which company undertook the work and why there is a gap between the nearby bush and where the barrier ends?</p> <p>Councillor Hiller may have responded:</p> <p>The cost to supply and install the timber knee rail fence was £891.00 and this cost was included in the capital project to install the new pedestrian crossing at this location.</p> <p>The work was undertaken by Skansa [Peterborough Highway Services], the Council's service provider for highway works.</p> <p>A gap was provided in the fencing to enable Amey grass cutting equipment to access the site for routine landscape maintenance.</p>
<p>The following questions were submitted in accordance with Standing Order 17, however were omitted from the Council Questions Report in error. The answers are attached below for information.</p>	
14.	<p>Question from Councillor Murphy</p> <p>To Councillor Hiller, Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning, Housing and Economic Development</p> <p>Recently I was asked by residents at Heartwell court why planning had been granted for bedsits on the old boiler house site, despite objections which they and I raised. Can you please provide an explanation and apologise to these folk who were very very worried that this may affect their quality of life. I did provide reasons for planning as to why this could be turned down showing that such dwellings are related to an increase in antisocial behaviour and that there</p>

	<p>are anticipated parking problems however I understand that the developer raised a complaint with the inspector who revoked the council's decision because the administration failed at the planning committee to cite the reasons for refusal. Further as I recall I asked for the matter to be looked at again but for some reason planning permission has been given without it going to committee.</p> <p>Councillor Hiller may have responded:</p> <p>The 2016 application followed the 2015, which was allowed on appeal having been refused by the Committee, with clear reasons for that refusal. I'm not aware why you are confused about this.</p> <p>The 2016 application wasn't called in to be determined by the Planning Committee by any Ward Councillor or any other party, so it wasn't determined by Committee. And, of the 89 affected residents' letters issued by our planning team asking for commentary, they had just one response. So, and with proper consideration given to the Inspector's reasons for upholding the applicant's appeal against the previous refusal, it was decided by delegated officer to be policy-compliant.</p> <p>Again, I'm unaware of why you are confused about this.</p> <p>You've requested an apology but haven't given me a reason to apologise.</p> <p>If I might clarify (for you) anything else about this very straightforward process please don't hesitate etc.</p>
15.	<p>Question from Councillor Murphy</p> <p>To Councillor Walsh, Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital</p> <p>Following my request at the last council meeting for information concerning the total amount of rent allowance each year paid to tenants who happen to be in properties owned by councillors or their relatives and my clarification about the question at that meeting and the assurance that this would be provided as I have not seen any response can this figure now be made available.</p> <p>Councillor Walsh may have responded:</p> <p>An answer to this question was provided at the previous meeting of Council.</p>